

**Town of *Dunstable* Selectboard**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 14, 2022**  
**Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827**

**Convened:** 5:01 pm

**Present:** Leah D. Basbanes, chair, Kieran D. Meehan, vice chair, Ronald J. Mikol, member(s); Brian M. Palaia, Town Administrator; Nicholas Papageorgiou, Sgt. of Police; Eric Hoar, Sgt. of Police; Darrell Gilmore, Sgt. of Police; Matthew Tully, Master Patrolman; Richard Nault, Police Dept.; Liz Sappet, Police Dept. Admin.

**Call to Order**

Ms. Basbanes called the meeting to order noting that this meeting has been called under the emergency meeting provisions of MGL Chapter 30A, §20(b). The only matter of business before the Board for this meeting is to facilitate discussion regarding the possible appointment of an Acting Chief of Police.

**Emergency Meeting in Accordance with MGL Chapter 30A, §20(b) to Discuss Possible Appointment of Acting Chief of Police**

Mr. Palaia reported he received a text regarding Chief James W. Dow. It was his partner informing him that the Chief would be out on leave for personal reasons for an indefinite period and that she would be helping provide the necessary paperwork. After discussions with various authorities, it was determined that the Board should appoint an Acting Chief of Police. This was very unexpected. The Board asked about how the town would determine the perimeters of the leave. Mr. Palaia responded that it's not defined at the moment and will be determined as we proceed. The Board asked if it could legally appoint an Acting Chief with the full authority and role of the Chief. Mr. Palaia responded Labor Counsel has advised it can, and it can be indefinite. The Board then asked why Sgt. Papageorgiou was already proposed as a candidate over the others. Mr. Palaia responded that this was the result of consultations between himself and others including the Board's Chair. This prompted discussion among the Board about the choice. This is a sensitive area regarding seniority and requisite judgement. Sgt. Gilmore is the most senior with some dispute as to who is the second most senior. Sgt. Papageorgiou asserted he was more senior to Sgt. Hoar having started full time a year prior to him, but Sgt. Hoar disputed that noting he's been part of the department longer having served first as a Reserve Officer prior to joining the full time ranks. The Board then asked the Sergeants if all three were interested in the position, noting it must make a decision based on what is in the best interests of both the town and the department. There are numerous issues on the horizon such as the Annual Town Meeting. This meeting is likely to be arduous. There's also the department's budget and work to complete with Advisory Board. With the Town Administrator departing, the role will be ever more important. The Interim Town Administrator may not be able to work as many hours and may not have the resources to provide the kind of support Mr. Palaia has. The Board expressed some concern that so many Department Heads are departing or now in this one case absent. The Town Administrator departs in March, the Town Clerk in May, the Conservation & Planning Administrator in July, and the Treasurer/Collector in August. Sgt. Gilmore noted that while he may have thought about being Chief in the past, today not so much. Still he highlighted that Sgt. Hoar has been trained by Chief Dow and is a natural choice.

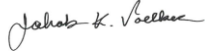
Sgt. Hoar briefly discussed his training and his work since becoming a Sergeant. Sgt. Papageorgiou noted he is in a position to do this, has the experience, and the history that makes him suitable. Mr. Palaia reminded that while seniority is a criteria, it isn't legally required. The Board asked Sgt. Papageorgiou about his standing in the Union and other matters he might have to set on hold for this and whether he would be willing and able. Sgt. Papageorgiou responded he would and he could. The Board asked the other officers present their thoughts. Officer Nault suggested the Board consider not making an appointment at this meeting and take time to consider the candidates. Mr. Palaia countered to ask who would be in charge otherwise. Sgt. Gilmore responded he would be as the most senior Sergeant, i.e. he would be the Sergeant-in-charge. Officer Tully submitted that he agreed with Officer Nault. The Board bandied the idea of holding another meeting in order to allow more consideration time. Mr. Palaia asked what the process would be. Will we seek interviews or will we make a choice then? The Board suggested perhaps holding some kind of interview process. There was also the hope that there would be more clarity regarding Chief Dow. There was then a question of any risk to the town liability wise as to the town not having a Police Chief in place. Mr. Palaia didn't think there was any specific liability, although it is possible. He did note that he may not be able to be available for a later meeting. Sgt. Hoar noted he is having minor hand surgery and also might not be available depending on the date. There was some discussion of modifying the ordinary meeting for February 15 back to an in person meeting and adding this item. Sgt.

*Approved and adopted on 3/3/22*

Gilmore suggested this could wait a little bit longer. The Board settled on Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 5 pm. The Board then asked the Sergeants to provide quick snapshots of their resumes just to help ensure all members understand their careers and qualifications. Nothing elaborate. All three Sergeants were fine with that decision. The Board made it clear that Sgt. Gilmore is by chain of command the supervising leader. Officer Nault asked if there would be consultations with anyone in the department. The Board responded this would be done in public meetings. Officer Nault expressed some concern about how members of the department could speak with candor and have input. The Board suggested that there are other ways that officers could register their feelings to the Board. The intention isn't to solicit opinion from the audience per se. But certainly officers could contact individual Board members. This is a difficult situation and is unfortunate as Chief Dow is a valued Department Head.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Meehan at 5:26 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mikol and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Voelker, Assistant Town Administrator